

# **Why is there no Secretary of Information? Lessons from the US Information Agency**

**A Monograph  
by  
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14. ABSTRACT Information and the ability to wield it is a key aspect of national security. Two years after the United States Information Agency (USIA) was terminated and merged into the State Department, the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 reminded the US of the importance of information and public perception. Since then, there have been repeated studies recommending the creation and resourcing of a national information capability. Some of these proposals refer to the USIA as an example of how the nation got information right during the Cold War. While the USIA accomplished much to be proud of, it failed as an enduring information capability because it never achieved a legislated role in policy formulation and because it was seen primarily as a weapon of the Cold War. Understanding the challenges, evolution, and ultimate demise of the USIA provides insight into the best way to design the nation's next strategic information organization. Proposals for a new information capability should look at the areas where the USIA failed in order to understand how to better equip a new information organization with the tools to secure the nation's interests. The author argues that recent congressional proposals for a new strategic communication organization will fail to create an enduring information capability in two ways. First, if they do not elevate the new organization to the cabinet level ensuring it plays a formal role in foreign policy formulation and second, if they tie the organization's origin and mission to a specific threat such as that posed by radical Islamists.					
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## **Abstract**

WHY IS THERE NO SECRETARY OF INFORMATION? LESSONS FROM THE US INFORMATION AGENCY by MAJ Elizabeth A. Sweeney, U.S. Army, 55 pages.

Information and the ability to wield it is a key aspect of national security. Two years after the United States Information Agency (USIA) was terminated and merged into the State Department, the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 reminded the US of the importance of information and public perception. Since then, there have been repeated studies recommending the creation and resourcing of a national information capability. Some of these proposals refer to the USIA as an example of how the nation got information right during the Cold War. While the USIA accomplished much to be proud of, it failed as an enduring information capability because it never achieved a legislated role in policy formulation and because it was seen primarily as a weapon of the Cold War. Understanding the challenges, evolution, and ultimate demise of the USIA provides insight into the best way to design the nation's next strategic information organization. Proposals for a new information capability should look at the areas where the USIA failed in order to understand how to better equip a new information organization with the tools to secure the nation's interests. The author argues that recent congressional proposals for a new strategic communication organization will fail to create an enduring information capability in two ways. First, if they do not elevate the new organization to the cabinet level ensuring it plays a formal role in foreign policy formulation and second, if they tie the organization's origin and mission to a specific threat such as that posed by radical Islamists.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ORGANIZATIONS AS NATIONAL SECURITY	
AGENCIES .....	3
The Importance of Projecting US Identity .....	3
Calls for a New 'USIA' .....	6
The Role of Soft Power and the Challenge of Defining the I in DIME .....	8
The Role of the USIA as a NSA .....	9
METHODOLOGY: A NEW MODEL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCIES .....	11
THE CREATION OF THE USIA .....	13
Historical Context .....	14
Underlying Ideas .....	15
Existing Informational Frameworks .....	16
Political Compromises .....	19
HOW THE USIA EVOLVED .....	21
Initial Agency Design .....	21
Congressional oversight of the USIA .....	27
Bureaucratic Conflict and its Impact on USIA Evolution .....	30
Executive Interests & Capabilities in USIA Evolution .....	35
Outside Events Impacting Agency Evolution .....	37
LESSONS AND APPLICATION FOR A FUTURE INFORMATION CAPABILITY .....	39
CONCLUSION .....	44
APPENDIX 1 – Strategic Communication versus Public Diplomacy .....	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	51

## INTRODUCTION

Why is there no Secretary of Information? The effects of globalization and its information revolution compound the foreign policy challenges of the ‘long war’ and require that the nation re-evaluate and redress the way that it resources the information element of its national power. In 1958, Harold Lasswell introduced a construct for understanding that a nation’s power is derived from its strengths in four primary areas – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic or DIME.<sup>1</sup> The informational element of DIME has been consistently under-resourced in our nation’s history, so much so that the DIME construct would be more accurately reflected as DiME. The executive branch is similarly organized around the DIME construct, with a Secretary of State, a Secretary of Defense, and a Secretary of the Treasury, each of whom has a seat on the National Security Council. Of these three, the military element of national power has historically been the best resourced, but the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury both have significant prestige and influence in shaping and carrying out foreign policy. What our executive branch is lacking is a position representing and advising the president on the informational element of national power.

Two years after the United States Information Agency (USIA) was terminated and merged into the State Department, the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 reminded the US of the importance of public perception. The attacks also reminded the nation that it was ill-equipped

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 204-205; Meghan L. O’Sullivan. *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 321n2.

to shape global perceptions of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Since then, there have been repeated studies recommending the creation and resourcing of a national information capability.<sup>3</sup> Some of these proposals refer to the USIA as an example of how the nation got information right during the Cold War. The USIA contributed to the end of the Cold War by consistently communicating American ideals of liberty to a global audience. The USIA performed a variety of functions under three main areas: communicating US foreign policy and American culture and ideals abroad; listening and understanding how foreign audiences perceive the US and its policies; and advising the executive on foreign policy formulation. While the USIA accomplished much to be proud of, it failed as an enduring information capability because it never achieved a legislated role in policy formulation and because it was seen primarily as a weapon of the Cold War.

The USIA is a good start for understanding what a national information capability should be able to do, however, nostalgia for the good old days of the Cold War should not blind us to the failings of the USIA. Instead, proposals for a new information capability should look at the areas where the USIA failed in order to understand how to better equip a new information organization. The author argues that congressional proposals for a new strategic communication organization will fail to create an enduring and effective national information capability if the new organization is not linked directly to the executive; if it does not have a formal role in policy formulation; and if its origin and mission are tied to a specific threat such as that posed by radical Islamists.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 125.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Paul, "Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations," *Rand Corporation*, 2009, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP250/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP250/) (accessed March 19, 2009).

## **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ORGANIZATIONS AS NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCIES**

The President of the United States carries much of the responsibility for US foreign policy. National security agencies assist the president with formulating and executing US foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> The USIA was one such agency that played a role in formulating and executing US foreign policy from 1953 until its termination in 1999. The mission of the USIA at its inception was to “submit evidence to peoples of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace.”<sup>5</sup> The goal was to ensure that US foreign policy was understood and well received by the rest of the world, in response to the misconceptions about the US that were being promoted by the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> As it came into being during the Cold War, the USIA was seen as a valuable tool in the war of ideas because it communicated American ideals of liberty to those corners of the world where there was none.

### **The Importance of Projecting US Identity**

In *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, Walter McDougall presents the idea that how we see ourselves as a nation informs how we will interact with the world and provides an historical account of American traditions that informed

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<sup>4</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 10.



US foreign policy throughout the nation's history. With this account, McDougall illustrates how grand strategy is more than a strategic plan for achieving the nation's objectives. McDougall describes American foreign policy history as a series of foreign policy traditions that characterize US grand strategy during the periods they are used.<sup>7</sup> For example, the way that the US embraced and then acted on its "Containment" tradition during the Cold War, reflected global conditions of industrialization that placed a high value on hierarchical structures and delineated procedures and processes. As a result, there were deliberate efforts to counter or limit Soviet influence in regions of the world while pursuing the systematic economic and cultural isolation of the Soviet Union. USIA radio broadcasts including news reports and cultural programs were a key component in the cultural defeat of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

Barry Posen and Andrew Ross identify four concepts for an American grand strategy such as selective engagement, neo-isolationism, primacy, and cooperative security that reflect the identity challenge that the US faces today in a post-Cold War world.<sup>9</sup> None of these concepts has risen to primacy as the US grand strategy for advancing US interests in a new century characterized by societies flattened by globalization.<sup>10</sup> The contradictions of ideas based in industrialization and those of globalization illustrate the problem of American identity and American grand strategy today. The United States is not sure which grand strategy to pursue,

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<sup>7</sup> Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 208-222.

<sup>8</sup> David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy," *International Security* (President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) 21, no. 3 (1996): 5-53, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005).

because the people and political leaders are uncertain about how we see ourselves interacting with the world.

In “*Wanted: A New Grand Strategy*,” Fareed Zakaria discusses the importance of grand strategy and describes how “in the absence of strategy, any administration will be driven by the news, reacting rather than leading. For a superpower that has global interests and is forced to respond to virtually every problem, it is all too easy for the urgent to drive out the important”.<sup>11</sup> His view is that each new presidential administration has an opportunity to shape US grand strategy. A national information capability tied to foreign policy could provide the continuity between administrations while maintaining a consistent and credible voice for American foreign policy abroad. Such an organization would help reduce the ad hoc communication of successive foreign policies and grand strategies that confuse rather than inform.

Joseph Nye addresses the importance of information as part of a comprehensive foreign policy. Nye’s thesis is that soft power, although difficult to wield, is a foreign policy enabler. He highlights the USIA as an example of how the nation wielded its soft power during the Cold War, and illustrates how its perceived value diminished in the post-Cold War period.<sup>12</sup> The nation’s current informational tools within the Department of State are inadequate for communicating the nation’s grand strategy.<sup>13</sup> The changes wrought by globalization and competing identities for a US grand strategy require that the nation develop and maintain an information capability to

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<sup>11</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Wanted: A New grandy Strategy,” *Newsweek*, December 8, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 100-104.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Blankley, Helle C. Dale and Oliver Horn, “Reforming U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century,” *The Heritage Foundation Background*, November 20, 2008, [www.heritagefoundation.org/Research/PublicDiplomacy/bg211.cfm](http://www.heritagefoundation.org/Research/PublicDiplomacy/bg211.cfm) (accessed December 18, 2008), 4-7.

project US identity that reflects current strategic realities and which is flexible enough to support and secure the nation's interests as defined by any of the grand strategy traditions.

## **Calls for a New 'USIA'**

Recent calls from a variety of groups including think tanks, congressional representatives, academics, and military members advocate for reviving an information capability within the US government and a refocusing of America's message to advance US foreign policy abroad.<sup>14</sup> These calls reflect the reemergence and recognition of information as an essential part of the nation's grand strategy and identify the need to build strategic communication back into the nation's grand strategy. Most recently, both the House and the Senate proposed legislation to create a national information capability they call strategic communication and strategic communications.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Craig Cohen and Noam Unger, "Surveying the Civilian Reform Landscape in What an Engagement Strategy Entails: Is the United States Government Equipped?," *The Stanley Foundation*, The Stanley Foundation and The Center for a New American Security, 2008, <http://reports.stanleyfoundation.org> (accessed August 19, 2008); Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century*, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University (Princeton: Princeton Project on International Security, 2006); William P. Kiehl, ed., *America's Dialogue with the World*, (Washington, DC: Public Diplomacy Council, 2006); Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 123; Christopher Paul, "Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations," *Rand Corporation*, 2009, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP250/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP250/) (accessed March 19, 2009); "Project on National Security Reform: Ensuring Security in an Unpredictable World," Center for the Study of the Presidency, July 2008, <http://www.pnsr.org/web/page/682/sectionid/579/pagelevel/2/interior.asp> (accessed August 25, 2008); *Strategic Communication Act of 2009*, HR 489, 111th Cong., 1st sess. (January 13, 2009); *Strategic Communications Act of 2008*, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008); Michael J. Zwiebel, "Why We Need to Reestablish the USIA," *Military Review* (Combined Arms Center), June 2008.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 1 for the definitions of strategic communication, strategic communications, and public diplomacy.

Senate bill 3546 (S.3546), the Strategic Communications Act of 2008, was introduced in September 2008. This bill proposes “to establish the National Center for Strategic Communication to advise the president regarding public diplomacy and international broadcasting to promote democracy and human rights, and for other purposes.”<sup>16</sup> The bill acknowledges the need for a ‘national strategic communications strategy’ and the need for an agency to develop and carry out this strategy. The bill essentially proposes to create an agency that supports the nation’s security through international communications. House Resolution 489 (HR489), the Strategic Communication Act of 2009, seeks to address the lack of a national information coordinating capability by requiring the Secretary of State to seek offers from “organizations whose primary role is research and analysis related to national security and foreign policy ... to establish a Center for Strategic Communication ... within such organizations.”<sup>17</sup> The Secretary of State would then select one of these organizations to establish this center for strategic communications. The center would advise national security actors and foreign policy makers in the executive branch on strategic communication and coordinate national level strategic communication.

The calls for a new, reformed, or expanded information capability generally assess the nation’s public diplomacy resident within the State Department as inadequate for meeting the needs of the nation today. What these calls for a new information capability do not agree upon is what to call this new capability or how to define what it will accomplish. If public diplomacy is

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<sup>16</sup> *Strategic Communications Act of 2008*, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008), section 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Strategic Communication Act of 2009*, HR 489, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess. (January 13, 2009), section 2.

not enough, then what is and what do we call it? The challenge of defining the desired information capability is described below.

## **The Role of Soft Power and the Challenge of Defining the I in DIME**

One of the problems with information as part of the nation's grand strategy concerns the multiple interpretations and definitions of what information is as it relates to the differing interpretations of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and propaganda. Within the federal government, there are several definitions of public diplomacy, none of which are concise. Most definitions take a paragraph to explain what public diplomacy is, often with multiple caveats as to what public diplomacy is not. To add to the confusion, there are differing ideas both within and without of the government about the relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy.

Recent attempts to define public diplomacy and strategic communication in the last few years do not include or tend to avoid the concept of public diplomacy as propaganda. In the early years of the Cold War, the term 'propaganda' was used matter-of-factly, if a little reluctantly, when describing the USIA and its information services.<sup>18</sup> The Smith-Mundt Act passed in 1948 in part to address the concerns surrounding propaganda on US soil. By the 1980s, public diplomacy was seen "as the decent term for what otherwise would be called propaganda."<sup>19</sup>

The reluctance to use the term propaganda for government information activities may be a reason why we have not yet created a Secretary of Information within the US government. The

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<sup>18</sup> Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 4.

nation's distrust of propaganda makes it difficult to pass the idea of a 'Secretary of Information' off as a benign information department. The fear of tainting a government agency with a propaganda label limits the nation's ability to address truthful information requirements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Strategic communication organizations today are often criticized for being propaganda machines, but as Edward Murrow stated in 1963, "American traditions and the American ethic require us to be truthful, but the most important reason is that truth is the best propaganda and lies are the worst. To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful."<sup>20</sup> Murrow's words soften the negative connotation associated with propaganda while providing guidance for information agencies, to report the truth.<sup>21</sup>

In general the common theme among the varying definitions of public diplomacy is using information to secure the nation's interests. The recent congressional proposals choose the term strategic communication to describe the nation's information capability are also consistent with this idea of using information to secure the nation's interests. Understanding the USIA's role in securing the nation's interests through information suggests what kind of role these two congressionally proposed organizations might also play in US foreign policy.

## **The Role of the USIA as a NSA**

The US Information Agency played a role in securing the nation's interests during the Cold War as part of the nation's grand strategy of "containment," in three main ways:

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>21</sup> For a more in depth review of the propaganda debate as it concerns strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts, see MAJ Jason Mead's 2008 monograph, "Using the United States Information Agency Methods in the Twenty-First Century."

communicating, listening, and policy formulation. From 1953 to 1999, the USIA used cultural exchanges, overseas libraries, radio and television broadcasts, magazines, and movies to communicate US foreign policy, culture, and values. As part of communicating with the world, the USIA also listened to the populations it communicated with in order to understand how US policies were received by individual countries. One of the benefits of having overseas posts in the USIA was the ability of USIA officers to learn the pulse of the nation where they were assigned. This understanding of foreign public opinion was regularly provided to the USIA's policy arm that was linked to the Department of State and sometimes fed into the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>22</sup> The two functions of communicating and listening provided the USIA director the expertise to advise presidents in policy formulation.<sup>23</sup>

While not equal to the Department of State, the USIA's role in foreign policy formulation was to help the executive and his other foreign policy advisors understand the world they sought to influence. Edward Morrow was the first director of the USIA who took "an aggressive role in advising the White House on the importance of overseas public opinion in making foreign policy decisions."<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, few administrations recognized the value of this expertise, and there was no consistent use of the USIA in policy development.<sup>25</sup> By helping to formulate and carry out US foreign policy, the USIA performed a critical role as a national security agency, although

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<sup>22</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 139.

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 486-487, 497.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 87.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 85-86, 200-201.

its resources and influence varied over time as a reflection of domestic politics, executive interest, and changes in the nation's grand strategy.

## **METHODOLOGY: A NEW MODEL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCIES**

Amy Zegart proposes a model that ties the effectiveness of a national security agency to the conditions of its initial design and subsequent evolution. Her model applied to the USIA explains why the USIA was terminated in spite of its importance for communicating US foreign policy to meet national security goals. Zegart's model approaches national security agencies as different from other domestic government agencies. Zegart uses her National Security Agency Model to show how national security agencies are created and evolve not with their effectiveness as an important part of our nation's security and foreign policy, but as a result of compromises between the president, bureaucrats, and Congress that are not made with the nation's best interests in mind. Zegart's model for national security agencies as applied to the USIA provides insights into our nation's approach to national security and foreign policy with respect to information and the need to communicate foreign policy.

It is beyond the scope of this monograph to examine all aspects of strategic communication and strategic communication organizations. However, Zegart's model provides a lens that allows a focused investigation into the structure and evolution of one strategic communication organization. The remaining sections of this monograph will apply Zegart's model to the USIA. This will identify lessons to be learned from the creation and evolution of the USIA that might be applicable to the creation and evolution of future strategic communication organizations designed to promote US foreign policy.

Amy Zegart's model for national security agencies contains five main ideas: the executive branch drives initial agency design; agency design reflects the conflict between interested bureaucrats and the president; the executive branch drives agency evolution; Congress exercises only sporadic oversight of the national security agency due to weak incentives and blunt



tools; and finally, that the evolution of a national security agency can be explained by the “initial agency structure, the ongoing interests of relevant political actors, and exogenous events.”<sup>26</sup> The USIA is analyzed from the perspective of these five proposals in the following three sections.

Zegart explains that because foreign policy is primarily the president’s responsibility, the executive branch has the greatest incentive to create and reform national security agencies designed to formulate, support, and carry out foreign policy.<sup>27</sup> While the president has the greatest incentive, government bureaucrats working in the areas of national security also have strong ideas on how national security agencies should be designed, and they will use their experience and expertise to influence the president and shape initial agency design to their ideas.

Bureaucrats working in the areas of national security have influence over the executive for three main reasons. First, bureaucrats have expert advice that presidents are usually reluctant to ignore. Second, they may refuse to cooperate with the president if they are ignored. The threat of bureaucratic shirking can deter a president from making decisions that his bureaucrats are opposed to, resulting in compromised decisions. Third, bureaucrats may threaten the design or reform process with press leaks that undermine presidential support for change.<sup>28</sup> In section three, the Creation of the USIA, Zegart’s first two proposals, that the executive drives initial agency design and that the initial structure of the national security agency reflects a compromise between interested bureaucrats and the president, help explain the creation and initial design of the USIA.

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<sup>26</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>27</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 29.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 50-51.

Section four, the Evolution of the USIA, looks at how the initial design of the USIA, presidential, congressional, and bureaucratic interests, and external events shaped the evolution of the USIA from 1953 to 1999. The New National Security Agency model proposes that Congress exercises limited oversight of national security agencies because they have little incentive to become involved and when they do, they have limited access to the sensitive information that might help regulate or direct national security agency reform.<sup>29</sup> Zegart argues that national security agencies do not have many interest groups representing them in Congress, and that the average American is not concerned about how their legislative representatives are voting on foreign policy.<sup>30</sup>

Although the president drives agency evolution, political and bureaucratic interests require him to compromise on agency reform, just as they did in agency design. More than anything else, the initial design and structure of the national security agency shapes its evolution. Looking at the USIA using the National Security Agency model in the following sections indicates the importance of the initial agency design to the ability of the agency to serve its purpose despite competing political interests.

## **THE CREATION OF THE USIA**

Amy Zegart proposes that the executive branch plays a central role creation of national security agencies and that the creation of these agencies serves self-interests more than national

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 26-29.

<sup>30</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 26, 102.

interests.<sup>31</sup> Zegart argues that the interplay between the interested players results in a compromise that is neither efficient nor necessarily effective. This give and take between bureaucrats, Congress, and the executive is a reflection of our political system and one that we cannot escape. Understanding this give and take in the formation of national security agencies is critical to anticipating where they might come up short in performance. The USIA came into being as the Cold War heated up in 1953, but it grew out of a World War Two propaganda organization and was encouraged into being by both the vision of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and pre-existing organization bureaucrats. While conceived as a way to counter Soviet anti-West propaganda the resulting compromise between the interested players ensured the continuation of disputes over, opposition to, and disorganization of the USIA and “ensured a certain marginalization of the overseas effort.”<sup>32</sup>

## Historical Context

US experiences in both the First and Second World War shaped the US government’s understanding of, and appreciation for an information capability they called “propaganda” and “public diplomacy.” Created in 1917 initially as an information organization focused on the US domestic audience, the Committee for Public Information (CPI) mission transformed to one of promoting democracy and anti-authoritarianism among foreign audiences.<sup>33</sup> During World War II, President Truman created the Office of War Information (OWI) to explain and garner support

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 68-69.

<sup>32</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 1.

for US policies among both domestic and foreign audiences. The Voice of America (VOA) program came into being under the OWI, as did the US Information Service (USIS) as part of the OWI's overseas branch. During WWII, the USIS operated through 26 posts in Europe, Africa, and East Asia.<sup>34</sup> The OWI began transitioning to a peace-time foreign-focused information service in 1945, but its overseas structure provided the baseline for the future US Information Agency created in 1953.

## Underlying Ideas

Between 1945 and 1953, the United States came to grips with the emergence of a Cold War with the Soviet Union. In his 1946 "Long Telegram", George Kennan made recommendations for US policy and the nation's approach to the Soviet Union. His following statement explains one reason why the USIS as part of the OWI was maintained after WWII.

We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And, unless we do, Russians certainly will.<sup>35</sup>

The "Long Telegram" and the "X Letter" that followed it also describe a required national capability to "put forward" this "constructive picture... of the world we would like to see." The OWI and USIS provided that capability, except they were organizations created in

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<sup>34</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 17-34; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>35</sup> George Kennan, "The Long Telegram," February 22, 1946, <http://www.ntanet.net/KENNAN.html> (accessed December 19, 2008).

war-time that now needed a peace time charter. In what became known as the Truman Doctrine, President Truman pledged to assist Greece and Turkey and all “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation” to remain free from Soviet influence in a March 1947 address to Congress and the nation.<sup>36</sup> Truman’s commitment also played an important role in maintaining the nation’s wartime information capability and transforming it into a peace-time role.

## Existing Informational Frameworks

While the president, Congress, those working in the information programs, and the Department of State recognized the need for a national information capability to address and counter Soviet propaganda, there was not a consensus on how this capability should be created. There were political and budgetary reasons for disbanding the OWI in 1945, but there was no other organization with its information capability.<sup>37</sup> Truman chose to keep some of the OWI’s functions by consolidating the VOA and USIS into the State Department although with a significantly reduced budget. William Benton, the assistant secretary of state for public and cultural affairs, worked hard to increase funding for information programs from Congress, but it was not until 1948 when Congress acknowledged the increasing state-sponsored hostility towards Western cultural influences in Eastern Europe that the nation’s cultural and informational programs received the resources required for waging the Cold War.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford university Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 10-11.

The 1948 Smith-Mundt (the United States Information and Educational Exchange) Act formalized the US response to Soviet measures to counter US influence abroad.<sup>39</sup> It addressed the need for a communication agency within the government to “promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries” by authorizing “the preparation and dissemination abroad of information about the United States, its people, and its policies through press, publications, radio, motion picture, and other informational media and through information centers and instructors abroad.”<sup>40</sup> The new assistant secretary for public affairs, George Allen, anticipated the ways that the Smith-Mundt Act would impact the way the nation conducted its foreign policy, calling it revolutionary.<sup>41</sup> The authorizations and resources given to USIS posts and the VOA enabled the state department to use information to extend and enable foreign policy.

As the purging of Western cultural influences from Eastern Europe continued and with the beginning of the Korean War, President Truman began what he called a “Campaign of Truth” that targeted US information, psychological, and propaganda operations against hostile communist countries. Congressional support for the campaign quadrupled appropriations for information operations.<sup>42</sup> With this new emphasis on its information activities, the State Department commissioned the help of Harvard and MIT academics to determine how best to

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<sup>39</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 46; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>40</sup> US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Smith-Mundt Act). Public Law 80-402, 22 § 1461: *vLex*, <http://vlex.com/vid/sec-general-authorization-19200986> (accessed February 19, 2009), section 2 and section 501.

<sup>41</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>42</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 14, 16.

breach the Iron Curtain with information. Called Project TROY, among the partnership's recommendations was the observation that US information programs were not synchronized:

Calling attention to bureaucratic infighting and turf guarding among State, Defense, CIA, and other agencies, the study group concluded that 'the parts are there – in separate agencies and departments – but the whole is not there.' Absent a 'coherent relationship under central direction' of the economic, military, diplomatic, and information services, 'our political warfare will lack the striking power it needs today'.<sup>43</sup>

This assessment prompted President Truman to create the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) to synchronize the nation's information operations in 1951. The PSB did not succeed in its mission due to budgetary limitations, bureaucratic in-fighting, and the political ramifications of the Korean War, but to some politicians and bureaucrats it illustrated the need for an agency separate from the State Department to consolidate and coordinate all of the nations information programs.<sup>44</sup> This observation began the decades long debate about where the nation's information agency belonged. Should the State Department, as the lead foreign policy agency, retain its authority over the nation's overseas information capability? Or did State Department control result in a marginalization of information diplomacy in favor of more traditional diplomacy? Another argument against State Department authority reflected Project TROY's observations from above: that self-serving bureaucratic interests and turf wars resulted in a duplication of the nation's information efforts that increased costs to the taxpayer and provided inconsistent messages abroad.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 19.

## Political Compromises

Within a few weeks of taking office in 1953, President Eisenhower created two committees that produced opposing recommendations on whether or not to have a separate information agency. The Advisory Committee on Government Organization recommended that the USIS become its own agency outside of the State Department, incorporating the other government information programs. This recommendation had the support of Secretary of State Dulles and much of the State Department. Adhering to the idea that “propaganda should be a servant of policy and therefore be clearly subject to policy guidance,” the Committee on International Information Activities initially recommended that “psychological warfare should be integrated on an equivalent level of importance with political, economic, and military initiatives,” providing the reasoning for maintaining the information capability within the state department.<sup>45</sup>

President Eisenhower wanted the information program to remain within the State Department, but Secretary Dulles wanted to distance traditional foreign policy from the information program and argued successfully with Eisenhower to separate the two.<sup>46</sup> Dulles saw “the information program as a nuisance as well as a potential threat to his own ability to conduct the nation’s foreign policy.”<sup>47</sup> The result was a compromise between Eisenhower and Dulles that enabled Dulles to get his cake and eat it too. The information program became a separate organization from the State Department while the “secretary of state had the authority to ‘direct

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<sup>45</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 24-25.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 67; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>47</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 26.



the policy and control the content of the USIA.”<sup>48</sup> This compromise reflects the extent to which bureaucratic power can influence the creation and evolution of national security agencies like the USIA. “If faced with intense bureaucratic opposition [presidents] will almost always settle for something rather than nothing, for partial reforms and compromises instead of their ideal agency design.”<sup>49</sup>

Building on Truman’s vision while bringing his own convictions about the power of information based on his wartime experiences, President Eisenhower submitted his Reorganization Plan No. Eight to Congress in 1953, officially establishing a US Information Agency as a new and separate organization within the executive branch.<sup>50</sup> Many of the informational responsibilities authorized and assigned to the Department of State by the Smith-Mundt Act were transferred to the new USIA under this reorganization plan.<sup>51</sup> Two months later, President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10477 ensuring that the director of the USIA had authorities similar to the Secretary of State for carrying out his global responsibilities in the USIA.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50.

<sup>50</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 52.

<sup>51</sup> United States Congress, *United States Code: Congressional and Administrative News, 83rd Congress - First Session, 1953*, Vol. One (West Publishing Company & Edward Thompson Company, 1953), 897-898.

<sup>52</sup> Executive Order 10477. “Authorizing the Director of the United States Information Agency to exercise certain authority available by law to the Secretary of State and the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration,” *The Federal Register*, August 1, 1953, <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10477.html> (accessed December 10, 2008), section 3.

## HOW THE USIA EVOLVED

Amy Zegart's National Security Agency model shows that initial agency design influences the evolution or reform of that agency over time. Additionally, the interests of the executive, Congress and individual legislators, and bureaucrats to reform or change the agency, as well as their capability to do so, interact and shape national security agency evolution. Outside events also influence agency evolution, as domestic and global politics alter the nation's priorities.

In its 46-year existence, the USIA evolved to meet political requirements under the ideological umbrella of containment during the Cold War.<sup>53</sup> What follows is an overview of how the initial design of the USIA, the interests and capabilities of political actors in changing the USIA, and key events shaped USIA evolution.

### Initial Agency Design

The end result of competing political and bureaucratic interests was a separate information agency outside of the State Department, despite the caution from the Committee on International Information Activities that an independent agency would be less effective and more vulnerable to the congressional attacks and the political maneuverings of more established

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<sup>53</sup> See for example, Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004); Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1989); John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

agencies.<sup>54</sup> As a separate agency, the USIA was linked directly to the president by his appointing authority for the director of the USIA. Because the USIA had no formal role in policy formulation, this link was important for establishing a relationship between the executive and the USIA director for advice on international opinion and the reception of US foreign policy.

Although the USIA was a separate agency, the State Department provided guidance on policy objectives and approved the content of USIA information programs.<sup>55</sup> The USIS and VOA fell under the new USIA, while the international cultural exchange programs remained under the State Department. Adding to the confusing relationship with State, the USIS retained its geographic structure and location with US embassies and consulates abroad making its overseas offices dependent on the State Department for support.<sup>56</sup>

The greatest challenge presented by the separation was in policy formulation. Several authors address the under-utilization of the USIA in policy formulation in their books on the USIA.<sup>57</sup> The initial design of the USIA gave it the capability to participate in policy formulation with its expertise in regional public opinion, but it did not give the USIA access to policy

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<sup>54</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 26-27.

<sup>55</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 145; John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 53; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>56</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 53, 90.

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004); John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

formulation. While the diplomatic, military, and economic aspects of national power all played roles in policy formulation as cabinet and NSC members, the informational aspect was missing from the foreign policy equation. The role envisioned for USIA was not for it to usurp the Department of State but to help in shaping foreign policy to ensure it would be received as intended by an international audience. If the USIA had a formal role in policy development, this would have included the information element in US foreign policy and ensured that the USIA was more than a mouthpiece.

When President Eisenhower reformed the NSC, he established patterns for the nation's foreign policy formulation that essentially excluded the USIA from playing a prominent role.<sup>58</sup> Wilson Dizard, a former USIA foreign service officer, professor of international affairs, and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, observed that the "USIA's limited role in national security planning during the Eisenhower years had continuing implications for the agency's role during the long decades of Cold War confrontation."<sup>59</sup>

Although a separate agency under the executive, the Secretary of State determined the content that the USIA disseminated. This deference to State's guidance reduced the prestige and influence of the USIA director in the government bureaucracy.<sup>60</sup> The USIA required a separate section to liaison with State in order to ensure that information programs were on message with

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<sup>58</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 68.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>60</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 93-94; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 26.

foreign policy. Over time, the two organizations succeeded in developing a close relationship for policy development and implementation.<sup>61</sup>

Wilson P. Dizard and John W. Henderson both wrote about the state-USIA relationship in policy development. In 1969, Henderson stated that the two organizations cooperated well by the time President Johnson was in office, so long as there was “mutual confidence” between the State and USIA policy staff. Regular reassignment of personnel within both agencies presented some challenges in this respect however.<sup>62</sup> Writing in 2004, Dizard was more critical of the effectiveness and influence of the USIA on policy formulation. Dizard argued that the USIA and State Department cooperated well on policy development, but because the USIA did not have a voice in the NSC, USIA involvement in policy development was limited to the lower-levels.<sup>63</sup> The USIA was occasionally invited to meetings of the NSC, but never as a full member. It was not until the Kennedy administration when the USIA director became a regular attendee at NSC meetings, and this access varied from administration to administration depending on the president’s interest and relationship with the USIA. Both Dizard and Henderson agreed that the creation of the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG), in 1966 under Johnson, finally, although temporarily, elevated the USIA’s foreign-policy role. Membership in the SIG established USIA input at the highest levels of policy formulation.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 200.

<sup>62</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 200.

<sup>63</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizrd, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 147.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 147; John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 68, 93.

The initial design of the USIA reflected the compromise between the interests and concerns of the President Eisenhower, the Secretary of State and Congress. Had there not been bureaucratic resistance on the part of Dulles, the USIA might have fallen under the State Department with the full support of the Secretary of State, or the USIA director might have been given membership on the White House's National Security Council or made a cabinet member. Either alternative would have better enabled the USIA to advance US interests abroad. Instead, the USIA remained a separate organization, lacking the political prestige and clout required to contribute fully as a policy-forming organization, and relying on the preferences of each president to determine the extent of USIA policy influence. As a lower-tier and unattached organization, the USIA was not buffered against the politics of Congress nor protected by a consistent bureaucratic strong-man such as the Secretary of State. The executive-bureaucratic compromise ensured that the design of the USIA took the path of least resistance (bureaucratic resistance). These conditions of the USIA's creation also set the conditions for its evolution over the next 46 years.

Although the Smith-Mundt Act was passed five years before the USIA was created, it significantly impacted the initial design of the USIA by limiting its political influence in Congress. The Smith-Mundt Act also limited the USIA's evolution by restricting broadcasting to the international public, which was complicated by the revolution in telecommunications. Zegart argues that one of the characteristics that make national security agencies different from domestic agencies is the lack of interest groups that influence policy decisions and lobby Congress. She cites an 1990 analysis by Close, Bologna, and McCormick, showing that the number of interest groups related to national security agencies is significantly less than those representing domestic

agencies.<sup>65</sup> One of the conditions of the USIA design was that it had almost no interest groups at all.<sup>66</sup>

While it enabled the informational aspect of US foreign policy, the Smith-Mundt act significantly restricted informational activities addressed specifically at US audiences. A stipulation within the Smith-Mundt Act, conceived as a way to protect Americans from being propagandized by their own government, expressly forbids the dissemination of information within the United States.<sup>67</sup> The Smith-Mundt stipulation against propagandizing the US public ensured that the USIA would have little or no access to the American public and by extension, interest groups promoting or offended by their activities. However, with the dramatic changes in communications capabilities and the reach of the World Wide Web, this stipulation is impossible to enforce as US audiences have a variety of opportunities to receive international broadcasts. As such, the law, as written has become more limiting in the kind of informational activities that the government can engage in, especially the open, truthful, and non-covert. As telecommunications capabilities began to reach global audiences, particularly through television news and later through the internet, the limitations of Smith-Mundt became even more restrictive.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999) 23.

<sup>66</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 233.

<sup>67</sup> US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Smith-Mundt Act). Public Law 80-402, 22 § 1461: *vLex*, <http://vlex.com/vid/sec-general-authorization-19200986> (accessed February 19, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Matt Armstrong, "Rethinking Smith-Mundt," *Small Wars Journal*, July 28, 2008, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/07/rethinking-smithmundt.php> (accessed February 18, 2009), 17.

## Congressional Oversight of the USIA

Amy Zegart argues that Congress provides limited oversight of national security agencies because there are fewer reasons to compel congressional interest. Most constituents are not interested in foreign policy and congressional interest tends to reflect voter interest. While Congress has the capability to influence national security agency evolution, with little interest in oversight, Congress shows little interest in shaping national security agency evolution.<sup>69</sup> Congressional oversight of foreign policy is organized into several different committees, further limiting congressional reform of national security agencies with its divided capability.<sup>70</sup>

McCubbins and Schwartz provide an explanation of congressional oversight that strengthens Zegart's argument. McCubbins and Schwartz argue that Congress prefers what they call *fire-alarm-type* oversight to *police-patrol-type* oversight. Fire-alarm oversight occurs when special interest groups raise legislative awareness about an issue, which Congress must then address in order to be responsive to their constituents. Police-patrol oversight occurs when Congress legislates measures to check on government agencies and programs. These measures are cumbersome and require a greater investment of time on the part of the legislators. Thus, Congress typically uses the fire-alarm type of oversight to determine what issues to look into or act upon, relying on the American public to tell them what is important.<sup>71</sup> They identify:

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<sup>69</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 102.

<sup>70</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 103.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms," *American Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (February 1984), 172.



What has appeared ... to be a neglect of oversight is really a preference-an eminently rational one-for fire-alarm oversight.... In examining congressional policies and their impact, do not just ask how clear, detailed, or far-sighted congressional legislation is. Ask how likely it is that fire alarms will signal putative violations of legislative goals and how Congress is likely to respond to such alarms.<sup>72</sup>

McCubbins and Schwartz sought to counter critics who argued that Congress neglected to provide oversight in some cases with their thesis that Congress does provide oversight, but that the less overt, informal fire-alarm type of oversight relies on interest groups to raise the alarm.

McCubbins' and Schwartz's arguments help understand why Congress provided limited oversight of the USIA. In regards to congressional oversight of the USIA, the Smith-Mundt Act prohibited not only information programs aimed at a US audience, but also prohibited providing information about these programs domestically.<sup>73</sup> The Smith-Mundt Act served to limit congressional interest in the USIA, as it restricted pre-existing information agencies from engaging the American public. Essentially, the Smith-Mundt Act sealed-off the American public from knowledge of foreign information programs, effectively eliminating any public interest (and by extension congressional interest) in what became the USIA. This resulted in few interest groups. Thus, the American people had very little idea what these agencies did, giving Congress little reason to be interested.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>73</sup> US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Smith-Mundt Act). Public Law 80-402, 22 § 1461: *vLex*, <http://vlex.com/vid/sec-general-authorization-19200986> (accessed February 19, 2009).

Congress built in some police-patrol oversight of the US information programs by creating the US Advisory Commission on Information, charged with representing the public interest, to provide annual reports to Congress as well as the executive branch.<sup>74</sup> The Commissions reported on USIA effectiveness in addition to making recommendations for changes to the programs. Ironically, it was police-patrol oversight that raised the issue of interest groups in regards to the USIA to Congress in the 1967 Stanton Commission report. This particular report also recommended lifting the Smith-Mundt prohibition on domestic access to USIA information programs, advocating that the American public should be able to see how their money is spent.<sup>75</sup> Lifting this prohibition would have raised interest group oversight, but it persists today.

There were some instances of congressional fire-alarm oversight, such as when the USIA violated or was perceived to have violated the anti-propaganda clause of the Smith-Mundt Act. For example, Dizard writes about the USIA in the 1960s commissioning American authors to write books that supported American foreign policy objectives to place in the USIS' libraries overseas. When it became known that some of the published works were being sold in American bookstores, Congress criticized the plan. The USIA abandoned the program because of the threat of appropriations cuts.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> US Congress, "22 § 1469. United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. *vLex*, <http://vlex.com/vid/united-advisory-commission-diplomacy-19204983>, (accessed February 19, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> US Advisory Commission on Information, "The Report of the 1967 United States Advisory Commission on Information," *Mountain Runner*, [http://mountainrunner.us/2008/11/stanton\\_commission.html](http://mountainrunner.us/2008/11/stanton_commission.html) (accessed February 22, 2009), 20-21.

<sup>76</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 183-184.

Although in general congressional capability and interest in reforming the USIA is limited, individual legislators influenced USIA evolution. Zegart describes the legislators who choose to become involved in national security agencies as “national security intellectuals” who risk disappointing their constituents by not focusing on domestic concerns.<sup>77</sup> One of these individuals was Senator Benton, a former assistant secretary of state for public affairs from 1945 to 1947.<sup>78</sup> Benton was instrumental in getting support in Congress for a separate information agency within the US government.<sup>79</sup> Fifty years later, Senator Jesse Helms was instrumental in terminating the USIA and merging its functions into the State Department. Helms worked for several years to reorganize the State Department, succeeding only when it was part of a compromise with the president “to secure Republican signatures on a chemical weapons treaty.”<sup>80</sup>

## **Bureaucratic Conflict and its Impact on USIA Evolution**

There are two aspects of bureaucratic influence in the evolution of the USIA, one internal to the government bureaucracies themselves and the other showing the relationship of bureaucrats and their executive. The first is best demonstrated by the relationship between the State Department the USIA. These two organizations embodied two different approaches to US

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<sup>77</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 35-36.

<sup>78</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 36-37.

<sup>79</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 20.

<sup>80</sup> Cull, 483; Thomas Lippman, "Senate Kills Two Agencies, Reorganizes Foreign Affairs Roles," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 1998: A23, (accessed 11 December 2008); Steven Lee Myers, "State Dept. Set for Reshaping, Pleasing Helms," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1997: A1 (accessed 11 December 2008); Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 34.

foreign policy. The State Department, especially under Dulles, represented the elite traditions of diplomacy that saw foreign policy carried out directly between heads-of-state and a few key representatives of each nation. The USIA represented a new way of communicating foreign policy to the entire population of a nation. Thus the creation of the USIA as separate but closely tied to the State Department brought together two bureaucratic cultures that were initially at odds with each other. State relied on cables from their embassies abroad and limited engagements between high-level diplomats to carry out US foreign policy. The USIA relied on public broadcasts and public libraries to communicate. These differences in the way the two cultures communicated were still a concern when the USIA merged into the State Department in 1999.<sup>81</sup> While traditional diplomats came to appreciate the power of mass communications for US foreign policy, this cultural tension initially limited the way that the USIA was used to advance foreign policy.<sup>82</sup>

Additional tensions within the government bureaucracy both limited and increased the USIA's influence and capability to advance foreign policy primarily in terms of budget and resources. From its very beginning, the USIA was in competition with the information programs of other departments and agencies, such as the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the CIA for budgeting and resources.<sup>83</sup> Competition with Defense increased during the Cold War as the militarization of the nation's foreign policy resulted in the decrease in the USIA's

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<sup>81</sup> Dave Krecke, "USIA-State Integration: A Work in Progress," *State Magazine*, December 2000: 23-27 (accessed 11 December 2008), 26.

<sup>82</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 217.

<sup>83</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 134.

budget as a percentage of government spending in favor of the Department of Defense.<sup>84</sup> During the Vietnam War, the USIA saw its resources increase as interagency cooperation grew to support the war.<sup>85</sup>

Outside of budgetary concerns, the USIA faced the challenge of broadcasts from these other agencies that were at odds with the USIA policy guidance. The nature of radio broadcast to a foreign audience made it difficult for listeners to distinguish from the different broadcasts. For example, DoD's Armed Forces Network broadcasts were aimed for the American servicemen overseas, but much of the local population in these countries tuned into the AFN broadcasts. The CIA's Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) also broadcast programs and messages in order to reduce or undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Occasionally, these broadcasts were at odds with the consistent messaging the USIA tried to communicate on behalf of the nation, requiring additional energies to correct the miscommunication and even more energies to try to undo any negative effects caused by the conflicting broadcasts.

An example of this kind of confusion was the RFE and RL broadcasting leading up to and during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. RFE and RL were criticized for the emotional tone of their broadcasts that Hungarians felt incited them to rebel while promising US support.<sup>86</sup> These broadcasts were hardly the kinds that lend credibility to the United States or its foreign

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<sup>84</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 500; Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 104.

<sup>85</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 77.

<sup>86</sup> Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 104-105.

policy, and they brought all US broadcasts under scrutiny, particularly among the listeners whose trust had to be re-earned.<sup>87</sup> Puddington and Hixson provide conflicting accounts of USIA and VOA culpability in inciting the rebellion, but regardless, the event shows the challenge that other broadcasts in the same region presented to the USIA.<sup>88</sup> The USIA learned to coordinate carefully with these organizations in order to ensure that each communication source was working in harmony with each other to better meet the nation's foreign policy needs. Despite the potential for interagency cooperation, the bureaucratic variety of information programs and their inadvertent competition for audiences diluted the potency of the USIA's and the nation's foreign policy communications.<sup>89</sup>

The second aspect of bureaucratic influence in the USIA's evolution regards the interaction between bureaucrats and the presidents. Amy Zegart describes how bureaucrats' expertise and their ability to "shirk" are major sources of their power to influence the executive, particularly in matters of national security. "National security agencies, by definition, deal with vital defense issues, so elected officials ignore, oppose, and reform those agencies at their peril."<sup>90</sup> Because the USIA director had no formal policy formulation role, it was the USIA director's relationship with and respect and trust afforded by the president that determined the

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<sup>87</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 83; Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 104.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 134-135.

<sup>90</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50.

extent to which bureaucrats wielded any influence over the executive in terms of agency evolution.

Perhaps the most influential USIA director was Edward Murrow. President Kennedy nominated Murrow, a widely known commercial media-man to be his new USIA director. Murrow maintained a close relationship with Kennedy and was respected by the bureaucrats who worked for and with him, members of Congress, and the president.<sup>91</sup> Murrow's influence helped increase the USIA budget and raised the level of the USIA's policy formulation role during his tenure as director.<sup>92</sup> Murrow "often said that his organization needed to be in on the policy take-offs as well as the landings at the White House level."<sup>93</sup> It was this insistence that the USIA become more involved in policy formulation that led Kennedy to invite Murrow to sit on the NSC and eventually led to the USIA's inclusion in the SIG.<sup>94</sup>

The changes to the USIA that occurred as a result of bureaucratic influence also occurred as a result of increased executive interest in changing or reforming the USIA. Where the greatest change occurred, the relationships between the presidents and the USIA director's were also the strongest. Bureaucratic influence on agency evolution is further examined in conjunction with the executive interest and capability to influence USIA evolution below.

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<sup>91</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 57-59.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 86-87.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 98.

## Executive Interests & Capabilities in USIA Evolution

Most national security agencies have statutory access to the executive through a cabinet position or the NSC. As a presidential appointee, the USIA director had access to the executive only when the president desired USIA input. Although the director did not enjoy regular access to the president by his position, the USIA was linked to the executive and able to perform a national security agency role. The following section highlights the importance of the executive relationship with the USIA.

The National Security Agency Model describes how the president has the greatest interest in agency reform, yet is hampered by bureaucrats and Congress. The president is responsible for the nation's foreign policy and is the person held responsible for foreign policy failures. He maintains a staff of experts to advise him on foreign policy, but at the end of the day, he answers to the American people for his foreign policy decision. This reliance on the expertise of bureaucrats puts the president at a disadvantage when there is bureaucratic resistance to his policy decisions and ideas. In the case of reform, if the bureaucrats are not on board with the president's reforms, they will resist evolution and could complicate or bog down the foreign policy machine.<sup>95</sup> The executive also needs the tacit support of Congress, particularly in the area of appointments and budget, in order to affect some changes in a national security agency.<sup>96</sup> These conditions of the American political system limit the executive's capability to reform national security agencies to better meet his and the nation's foreign policy needs. The most significant reforms of the USIA occurred when at least two of these three actors shared a common interest

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<sup>95</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 96.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 252n33.



and brought their combined capabilities together to influence evolution. The following examples of executive-bureaucrat and executive-congressional cooperation in reforming the USIA reflect the central role the executive plays in national security agency reform.

When he became president, Johnson continued to strengthen the role of the USIA in policy formulation. Johnson's pick for USIA director was attorney Leonard Marks who had Lady Bird Johnson as a client. Marks' relationship with the president and Johnson's support for empowering the USIA contributed to two significant steps in the evolution of the USIA.<sup>97</sup> In 1966, Johnson took the first formal step to incorporate the USIA into the policy formulation process by creating the SIG that included the USIA as a full and equal participant. Marks' close relationship with Johnson also gave him the political clout to convince Congress of the importance of granting USIA officers career status similar to what the State Department's foreign service officers enjoyed, helping the USIA recruit and maintain quality personnel for its information programs.<sup>98</sup>

As the "great communicator," President Reagan sharpened and used the USIA as a tool to advance his foreign policy objectives with the USIA playing a primary role in Reagan's ideological war against communism. Reagan appointed his close friend Charles Z. Wick as USIA director. With the prestige of the Presidency backing him, Wick succeeded in almost doubling the USIA budget from 1981 to 1989. The Reagan-Wick relationship also saw the USIA expand

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<sup>97</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 256; Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 98.

<sup>98</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 98.

operations with Radio Marti broadcasting into Cuba, and improve its overseas broadcasting capability.<sup>99</sup> As a member of Reagan's Special Planning Group, the USIA once again played an important role in policy formulation.<sup>100</sup> The Reagan administration demonstrated how presidential emphasis can magnify a national security agency's impact.

It was Clinton's relationship with Congress that shaped the last evolution of the USIA. In this case, the USIA was used as a bargaining chip to achieve other foreign policy goals that were being held up in Congress by Senator Jesse Helms. Helms had been trying to legislate a reorganization of the State Department for several years, which had been threatened with a presidential veto.<sup>101</sup> The Clinton administration finally acquiesced with a compromise that saw the termination of the USIA and a merging of its mission into the State Department.<sup>102</sup> This example shows how the tensions in an executive's relationship with Congress can shape agency evolution.

## **Outside Events Impacting Agency Evolution**

The last aspect of Zegart's model that contributes to national security agency evolution is external events, whether they are domestic politics or international crises. McCarthyism and its impact on the USIA is one example of how domestic politics can shape national security agency evolution. Senator McCarthy's crusade against communism and immorality impacted the USIS

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 200, 202-203.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>101</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JSC, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 34.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 483.

just before it became part of the USIA. Although McCarthy's main attacks occurred in the months prior to the USIA's creation, his influence negatively affected the evolution of USIA into an effective national security agency and prevented it from reaching its potential as a NSA. McCarthy's investigations into the USIS resulted in thousands of books being pulled from USIS overseas libraries and reduced overall funding for the USIS.<sup>103</sup> McCarthy's attacks resulted in accusations and denouncements from within the USIS, significantly impacting morale within the new USIA created a few months later.<sup>104</sup>

No other event shaped USIA evolution more than the Cold War. The USIA was created to address the nation's information and propaganda needs in the beginning of the Cold War. It learned valuable lessons about perception and trust during and after the Hungarian Revolution, and it saw its resources decrease in the 1960s as the nuclear arms race reflected the militarization of foreign policy. The end of the Cold War saw the USIA seeking a new purpose outside of the end of communism.<sup>105</sup>

The USIA fits Amy Zegart's national security agency model. Using this model to examine the USIA's creation and evolution demonstrates the significant ways that initial agency design influenced the evolution of the USIA, and in particular, the importance of executive

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<sup>103</sup> David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26-27; Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 56-57; John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 236; Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York, NY: New York Press, 1999), 192-196.

<sup>104</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 49-50.

<sup>105</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 213.

interest in the creation and development of national security agencies. The USIA's position as a separate agency outside of the State Department prevented it from having a formally recognized voice in policy development. As a national security agency, the USIA had the most input in policy development when the USIA director had a close and trusted partnership with the president. Otherwise, USIA influence in foreign policy waned or was filtered through the State Department. This demonstrates the importance of having presidential input in the selection of the USIA director.

Additionally, the USIA's birth as an organization designed to address a Cold War propaganda reality limited its perceived usefulness once the Cold War had ended. A national security agency with threat-based origins is unlikely to survive the elimination of that threat. The more enduring quality of the USIA was its broad mission that was not threat-based, but which communicated the idea of America abroad. This suggests that a future national information capability have communicating a broad set of American values as its one of its core functions in order to successfully communicate the nation's grand strategy in support of national security interests defined by any threat.

## **LESSONS AND APPLICATION FOR A FUTURE INFORMATION CAPABILITY**

The USIA was created as part of a grand strategy of "containment" to meet the nation's need for an information capability to counter Soviet anti-west and anti-US propaganda. With the end of the Cold War, the USIA's initial purpose for being ended. The USIA worked to adapt to meet the nation's post-Cold War information needs. Unfortunately, the emergence of a new grand strategy was too slow for the nation to recognize the continued relevance of a dedicated and

resourced information capability tied to foreign policy. The USIA was unable to overcome its perception as a “crisis tool” of containment while the nation failed to recognize the value of an enduring information capability and wished the USIA’s usefulness into the office of Public Diplomacy under the Department of State.<sup>106</sup> The absence of a new grand strategy today underscores the importance of a national information capability that has the staying power to bridge the gap between changing grand strategies.

As the nation seeks the best way to restore its information capability, it is important to recognize that the creation of a national security agency – and any new information capability tied to foreign policy would fit that role – involves compromises that are not necessarily in the best interests of the nation. Because political compromises influence agency design and evolution, lessons from the USIA suggest key elements for an information capability to be effective in spite of limiting compromises. Lessons from the USIA suggest that an effective information capability should have consistent and legislated access to the president, should be used in policy development, and should have a mission broad enough to flexibly counter any ideological threat to the nation.

As described in section one, there are two recent congressional proposals to create a national information capability. Understanding the National Security Agency model as applied to the USIA indicates potential problems with both of these bills in regards to the initial agency design and the importance of the executive in designing national security agencies. Although the USIA did not have statutory access to the president as a cabinet or NSC member, the initial

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<sup>106</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 500.

design of the USIA increased the chances that the executive would seek USIA input by linking the USIA to the president through his appointing authority. House Resolution 489 proposes that the Center for Strategic Communication act as a policy consultant. The Center will only be relevant as a policy consultant if they are actually consulted by the executive. House Resolution 489 does not give the president appointing authority for the Center's director, reducing the chances that the executive will consider the organization's policy input. In contrast, the proposed S.3546 provides the president appointing authority (with the consent of the Senate) for key positions in the center. The Senate bill does not require executive input into the design of the Center however, as opposed to the way the USIA was part of the reorganization plan that Eisenhower was required to submit to Congress.<sup>107</sup> The executive branch should lead the creation of this capability with the support of interested bureaucrats and Congress.

While both bills seek to address the problem of the nation's under resourced information capability in regards to foreign policy, neither bill would ensure that information expertise would be incorporated into foreign policy formulation. This new capability must have a primary role in foreign policy development, reflecting the importance of information as an element of national power with a recognized position on the National Security Council or in the cabinet. House Resolution 489 requires the Center to provide information and analysis to "the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence, leaving the NSC to determine whether or not the 'I' will be included in

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<sup>107</sup> Strategic Communications Act of 2008, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008), section 5.; United States Congress, United States Code: Congressional and Administrative News, 83rd Congress - First Session, 1953, Vol. One (West Publishing Company & Edward Thompson Company, 1953), 897-898.

policy formulation.<sup>108</sup> The Senate bill names the center director as the “principal advisor to the executive on strategic communications,” and requires that the director “coordinate the strategic communications efforts of all Federal agencies,” but there is no formal, legislated role for the director as a member of the NSC or the cabinet.<sup>109</sup>

If the nation’s strategic communication organization has no formal voice in policy formulation, the information element of national power will continue to be the diminutive ‘i’ in DIME, with no ability to shape policy in order to ensure policy is received as intended. Without this ability to shape foreign policy, the next communication organization will be limited to cleaning up the potential information perception messes. As Edward Morrow said, the “USIA needed to be ‘in on the [policy] take offs as well as the crash landings.’”<sup>110</sup> If the next information capability doesn’t have a seat at the policy table, it will be reduced to cleaning the kitchen after the dinner has been made.

This is not to say that policy formulation is the only important aspect of information and national security. As an enduring information capability to communicate foreign policy, the USIA was able to ensure the continuous presence of the United States in overseas communications in spite of its varying policy role. The nation benefitted from this agency that created and contained its own bureaucracy of information expertise, resulting in the consistent communication of US values and ideals – one of the primary goals of the USIA. One of the benefits of the USIA as its own agency was that in spite of its design to defeat communism, the

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<sup>108</sup> *Strategic Communication Act of 2009*, HR 489, 111th Cong., 1st sess. (January 13, 2009).

<sup>109</sup> *Strategic Communications Act of 2008*, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008), section 5.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 190.

USIA bureaucracy successfully communicated broader American principles to the world for more than 40 years. Regardless of the varying support they received from Congress or the president, the USIA's existence ensured the nation maintained some informational capability. Of the two bills, S.3546 has the potential to provide for an enduring national information capability.

Additional lessons from the USIA suggest that this new information or strategic communication capability should have a broad purpose to advance the interests of the United States without a specific ideology or enemy as its sole originating purpose. As we saw with the USIA, tying a national security agency to a specific threat could limit the perceived relevance of this capability. The Senate bill ties the National Center for Strategic Communication to the threat posed to American ideals by radical Islamists.<sup>111</sup> Tying the organization to a specific threat may result in calls for it to be downsized or eliminated when the nation one day faces a negligible threat from radical Islamists, putting the nation at risk again of having no information capability. The remaining language in S.3546 appears to empower the proposed National Center for Strategic Communication with broad guidelines to advance “the founding principles of the United States, including human rights, and the rule of law.”<sup>112</sup>

Neither bill is a result of executive initiative or influence, and neither bill solicits executive inputs. Zegart's National Security Agency model shows the importance of the executive in national security agency design. The absence of an executive role in this legislation should raise concerns about the effectiveness and duration of either of these new strategic communication centers. Additionally, Zegart's model applied to the USIA shows how initial

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<sup>111</sup> *Strategic Communications Act of 2008*, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008), section 3.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*



agency design impacts its evolution. While the USIA's mission to spread the ideals of the United States was broad, its genesis to counter a Soviet threat limited the perceptions of its functionality after the Cold War. The Senate bill in particular poses problems in this respect as it ties the need for a strategic communication center to a radical Islamist threat. The House bill proposes a center to coordinate and advise on strategic communication, without any reference to a broad national message or values. In essence, it only addresses half of the national challenge concerning an information capability by creating an organization to synchronize information efforts. It does not address the requirement for a broad American message. Any future organization designed to represent the nation's interests in the information aspects of national security should have a broad charter to communicate the ideas of democracy and American values such as liberty.

## **CONCLUSION**

The nation's information capability should reflect and carry the nation's grand strategy. Information and the ability to wield it is a key aspect of a national security policy. Understanding the challenges, evolution, and ultimate demise of the USIA provides insight into the best way to design the nation's next strategic communication organization to advance the nation's grand strategy. The challenge of this information organization is two-fold. First, in order to maintain relevance as an organization, it must be flexible and responsive to changing policy requirements. Simultaneously, the strategic communication message conveyed to the world must remain consistent over time in order to ensure the effectiveness of the message and the credibility of its communicator. In this sense, the initial USIA design that emphasized communicating an idea with broad appeal like liberty was successful. How should the nation's next strategic communication organization maintain a consistent message while remaining responsive to changing policy requirements?

Amy Zegart's model for national security agencies suggests that a new information capability tied to foreign policy must reflect executive attention and emphasis through a formal

link to policy formulation as part of the cabinet or the NSC. Additionally, the initial design must reflect the nation's requirement for a general information capability not tied to a specific threat. While current global concerns of Islamist extremism may have helped the nation recognize what it lacks in the area of strategic communication, a new organization to address this gap should be created not to confront extremism specifically, but to communicate the American values of democracy and liberty. These more broad American values give little to argue with, have a universal appeal, and endure beyond the threat-of-the-day that was part of the undoing of the USIA.

Just as the beginning of the Cold War provided the impetus to create the USIA, the enduring war on terror provides the impetus to increase resources to information, promoting information to a capital 'I' element of national power. The nation's next information capability should be elevated to the level of a cabinet position, and the nation should resource this information capability based on the lessons of the USIA. When evaluating proposed information organizations, it is important ask questions derived from USIA lessons such as what kind of policy role will the organization have, what is the new organization's relationship with the President of the United States, and what outside events are shaping the organization that might limit its functionality in the future. The post 9-11 world provides a new opportunity to improve upon and restructure US foreign policy systems.<sup>113</sup> An expanded information capability as part of a restructuring should not be a knee-jerk reaction to radical Islam, rather it should have an

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<sup>113</sup> Wilson P. Jr. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2004), 229; Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 147.

enduring purpose and structure to secure the nation's interests beyond the end of the "long war."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 500.

## **APPENDIX 1 – Strategic Communication versus Public Diplomacy**

One of the problems with information as part of the nation's grand strategy concerns the multiple interpretations and definitions of what information is as it relates to the differing interpretations of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and propaganda. Within the federal government, there are several definitions of public diplomacy, none of which are concise. Most definitions take a paragraph to explain what public diplomacy is, often with multiple caveats as to what public diplomacy is not. To add to the confusion, there are differing ideas both within and without of the government about the relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy.

The US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication published December 14, 2006 states that:

Public diplomacy is, at its core, about making America's diplomacy public and communicating America's views, values and policies in effective ways to audiences across the world. Public diplomacy promotes linkages between the American people and the rest of the world by reminding diverse populations of our common interests and values. Some of America's most effective public diplomacy is communicated not through words but through our deeds, as we invest in people through education, health care and the opportunity for greater economic and political participation. Public diplomacy also seeks to isolate and marginalize extremists and their ideology. In all these ways, public diplomacy is "waging peace," working to bring about conditions that lead to a better life for people across the world and make it more difficult for extremism to take root.<sup>115</sup>

The problem with this definition is that it describes what public diplomacy does and how it works more than it defines public diplomacy.

Edmund Gullion's description of public diplomacy states that:

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<sup>115</sup> Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, "US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication," December 14, 2006, [http://mountainrunner.us/2007/06/finally\\_a\\_national\\_strategy\\_on.html](http://mountainrunner.us/2007/06/finally_a_national_strategy_on.html) (accessed December 19, 2008), 12.

Public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses the dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of inter-cultural communications. Central to public diplomacy is the transnational flow of information and ideas.<sup>116</sup>

While Gullion is credited with first conceiving of public diplomacy, his thoughts above are also more description than definition. Edward Murrow took Gullion's description and pared it down to define public diplomacy "as interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily with nongovernmental individuals and organizations, and often presented as a variety of private views in addition to government views."<sup>117</sup> Nye uses this definition of public diplomacy.

In 2006, the executive director of the Public Diplomacy Council, Edward Kiehl wrote, "...public diplomacy is not an overseas version of public affairs. It is not 'spin control,' public relations, or marketing.... Public diplomacy is, in fact, America's dialogue with the world."<sup>118</sup> Kiehl went on to cite the USIA's definition as "public diplomacy seeks to promote the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Crocker Jr. Snow, *About Public Diplomacy*, <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/murrow/readings/aboutpd.html> (accessed February 16, 2009).

<sup>117</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 1p 107. Murrow was the director of the USIA during the Kennedy presidency.

<sup>118</sup> William P. Kiehl, ed., *America's Dialogue with the World*, (Washington, DC: Public Diplomacy Council, 2006), 5-6.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 6n1.

The above definition of public diplomacy mirrors the last mission statement of the USIA from 1997 Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan defines public diplomacy as “the action of engaging foreign audiences and opinion makers, through information and exchange programs, to advance U.S. national interests and strategic goals.”<sup>120</sup>

The 2003 Djerejian Report stated “public diplomacy is the promotion of the national interest by informing, engaging, and influencing people around the world.”<sup>121</sup> The most recent definition from the Department of State’s Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Jim Glassman in October 2008 defined public diplomacy as:

Diplomacy that's aimed at publics and sometimes gets officials engaging with those publics. Sometimes it's our publics engaging with those publics, foreign publics. Sometimes it's actually other foreign publics engaging with those foreign publics. And they may be foreign publics that we have encouraged to engage. So I think that it really is defined - I define it by the target audience and also try to distinguish it from official diplomacy which in general is our officials talking or interacting with their officials.<sup>122</sup>

On December 1, 2008 Glassman approved of blogger Matt Armstrong’s paring down of the above description to define public diplomacy as “the direct or indirect engagement of foreign publics to support national security objectives.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> United States Information Agency, *USIA Strategic Plan 1997-2002*, 1997, <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/abtusia/stratplan/pland.htm> (accessed February 16, 2008).

<sup>121</sup> Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World, “Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World,” *Public Diplomacy*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/23.htm> (accessed December 16, 2008), 13.

<sup>122</sup> James Glassman, “Blogger Roundtable with James Glassman,” October 28, 2008, [http://mountainrunner.us/2008/10/defining\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_prep.html](http://mountainrunner.us/2008/10/defining_public_diplomacy_prep.html) (accessed December 16, 2008).

<sup>123</sup> James Glassman, “Public Diplomacy 2.0: A New Approach to Global Engagement,” December 1, 2008, <http://mountainrunner.us/library/publicdiplomacy/publicdiplomacy20.html> (accessed December 16, 2008).

The Department of Defense definition of public diplomacy places it in a broader definition of strategic communication, whereas both Nye and Glassman view strategic communication as a subset of public diplomacy.<sup>124</sup> In his definition of public diplomacy, Joseph Nye describes three dimensions of public diplomacy, the second of which is “strategic communication, in which a set of simple themes is developed, much like what occurs in a political or advertising campaign.”<sup>125</sup> In October 2008, Secretary Glassman said “...I realize the military has a specific definition of strategic communications. I tend to use that term in - as a subset of public diplomacy and more interchangeably with war of ideas activities.”<sup>126</sup> Throughout its 34 page document, the December 2006 US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication uses the terms strategic communication and public diplomacy interchangeably until it defines public diplomacy in its conclusion (see above). The strategy never defines strategic communication.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> In January 2008, the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication published a report stating “Strategic communication is conducted not just by the Departments of State and Defense, but by at least 64 U.S. government agencies, 50 states, many U.S. cities, coalition partners, and a wide variety of civil society organizations. Public diplomacy, military civil affairs, military international education and training programs, cultural diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting, and support for democracy are among the means by which it is carried out.” Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, "Defense Science Board Report on Strategic Communication," January 2008, <http://comops.org/journal/2008/02/05/new-dsb-report-on-strategic-communication/> (accessed December 16, 2008), 12-13.

<sup>125</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 108.

<sup>126</sup> James Glassman, "Blogger Roundtable with James Glassman," October 28, 2008, [http://mountainrunner.us/2008/10/defining\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_prep.html](http://mountainrunner.us/2008/10/defining_public_diplomacy_prep.html) (accessed December 16, 2008).

<sup>127</sup> Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, "US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication," December 14, 2006, [http://mountainrunner.us/2007/06/finally\\_a\\_national\\_strategy\\_on.html](http://mountainrunner.us/2007/06/finally_a_national_strategy_on.html) (accessed December 16, 2008).

HR489 uses the broad term of strategic communication instead of the S.3546 term of strategic communications. The resolution states that:

Strategic communication describes a variety of instruments used by governments to understand global attitudes and cultures, to engage in a dialogue of idea between peoples and institutions, to advise policy makers, diplomats, and military leaders on the public implications of policy choices, and to influence attitudes and behavior through communications strategies.<sup>128</sup>

S.3546 defines strategic communications as “engaging foreign audiences through coordinated and truthful communications programs that create, preserve, or strengthen conditions favorable to the advancement of the national interests of the United States.”<sup>129</sup> An interesting and concerning distinction between the two definitions is the senate bill’s use of the word ‘communications’. Communications means the ways something is communicated, as opposed to the house bill’s use of the word ‘communication’, meaning the act of communicating.<sup>130</sup> Seemingly small, this difference could result in reducing an information capability to its broadcasts, while ignoring the listening role inherent in communication if the senate bill is passed.

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<sup>128</sup> *Strategic Communication Act of 2009*, HR 489, 111th Cong., 1st sess. (January 13, 2009), section 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Strategic Communications Act of 2008*, S.3546, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (September 23, 2008), section 5.

<sup>130</sup> *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, College Edition, s.v. “communication”.



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